**EVALUATING WEB Sources**

**Why we need to evaluate?**

There is an extremely wide variety of information on the Internet, ranging in its accuracy, reliability, and value. Unlike most traditional information media (books, magazines, organizational documents), no one has to approve the content before it is made publically. Since we do some researching it's our job to evaluate what we will include in our research and we need to evaluate whether we can rely to one or another side or not.

**How to evaluate?**

There is a list of criteria that can help you how to find a good Web resource and how to determine a good site from a bad one. Before you include information in your research paper from a site try to diagnose it by following questions of all of the criteria.

**Criteria for Evaluating Web Resources**

* Authority
* Accuracy
* Objectivity
* Currency
* Coverage
* Design

**Authority**

* Who is the author?
* What are his credentials?
* Does he have sufficient authority to speak on the subject?
* Is there any way to reach him?
* Is there an organizational or corporate sponsor?
* Is this page authentic, or is it a hoax?
* Is there a reference list?

What does the URL (Web address) say about the producer of the web site, and its purpose? Look at the final syllable in the domain name.

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| .gov | Government agency: [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov/) |
| .net | Internet Service Provider: [www.whitehouse.net](http://www.whitehouse.net/) |
| .com | Commercial site (Note: www.whitehouse.com is a pornographic site. Go there at your own risk.) |
| .edu | Higher education - [www.lesley.edu](http://www.lesley.edu/). Other educational sites may appear with different domain names: [www.whitehouse.gov/kids](http://www.whitehouse.gov/kids) |
| .mil | Military site- [www.navy.mil/](http://www.navy.mil/) |
| ~ | ("tilde") Personal site - <http://www.members.tripod.com/~DAdams/qkbrdinf.html> |
| .org | Organization; may be charitable, religious, or a lobbying group -[http://www.rtda.org](http://www.rtda.org/). |

**Accuracy**

* Is the content appropriate for your classroom or your assignment?
* Is the reading level appropriate for your students?
* Is the content appropriate for the age or developmental level of your students?
* Is the content accurate, complete, well written?
* Is the content relevant to your topic or question?

**Objectivity**

Does the content reflect a bias?

* Is the bias explicit or hidden?
* Does the identity of the author or sponsor suggest a bias?
* How does the bias impact the usefulness of the information?

**Currency**

* Is the information on the page up-to-date?
* Can you tell when the page was last updated?
* Are there dead links?
* Is there a difference between the date the information was created and the date the page was last updated?

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### Coverage

* Does the actual content of the site coincide with the author's stated purpose? If not, does it fall short of the author's claims?
* If you find that important aspects of the topic are not covered, does the author explain why?
* If portions of the site are "under construction" does the author indicate when they may be completed?
* Assume that you are looking for the best Web site providing a list of Internet resources in the field of history because you want to bookmark it for personal use. Which of the following sites do you feel is the most comprehensive?

### Design

* Is the content well-organized? If the site is extensive, does it have an internal index? Is search capability provided within the site?
* Does the overall design of the site make the content easier to comprehend? Is the design graphically pleasing or does it lack visual harmony and appeal?
* Does the site include automatic pop-up windows that distract attention from the main content and waste the user's time? Does intrusive advertising crowd the main content?
* Does the text follow accepted rules of spelling, punctuation, grammar, and usage?
* Which of the following sites do you feel is better designed?

References:

<http://www.lesley.edu/library/guides/research/evaluating_web.html>

<http://lib.nmsu.edu/instruction/evalcrit.html>

<http://libguides.lib.msu.edu/evaluate>